

Chapter 7 – Historic Resources

7. Historic Overview

The Creek Indians, whose lower trading paths passed through the area, first inhabited Augusta and Richmond County. The first Europeans to visit the area were members of an expedition led by the Spanish explorer Hernando DeSoto, around 1540. The area around Augusta was settled by English fur traders just prior to the city's founding. One of these early settlements, known as St. Paul's Parish, was settled mainly by people from Virginia and North Carolina.

In 1736, British General James Edward Oglethorpe had surveyor Noble Jones lay out the first forty lots for what would become Augusta. In taking this action, Oglethorpe was motivated in part by a desire to control the fur trade, which was already flourishing at Fort Moore on the South Carolina side of the Savannah River. Named in honor of Princess Augusta, wife of the Prince of the Wales, the city developed as a trade center (fur, tobacco, cotton) and gateway for new settlers heading west to other parts of Georgia.

Richmond County, one of the eight original counties in Georgia, was formed from St. Paul's Parish in 1777. The county was named in honor of the Duke of Richmond, Charles Lenox, a friend of some of the settlers in America. Columbia and McDuffie Counties were later formed from parts of Richmond County. During the American Revolution, the British used Augusta as a communications center. When Light Horse Harry Lee captured Augusta in 1781, the British had to relinquish their claim to most of Georgia. Augusta then served as the capital of Georgia from 1785 to 1795.

Tobacco was the dominant cash crop in the early years of the county. The invention of the cotton gin made cotton a more profitable crop than tobacco. Eli Whitney, the inventor of the cotton gin, built one of his early prototypes on Rocky Creek in the county. By 1820, the Augusta area was the terminus for riverboats, barges, wagon trains, and traders carrying staples and produce to be shipped to overseas markets.

During the Ante-Bellum period, area residents began to realize the importance of processing and manufacturing goods made from cotton and other crops. In 1834, John Schley located a factory, called Belleville, on Butler Creek. In the same year, William Schley, George Schley, and Daniel Cook built Richmond Factory on Spirit Creek. In 1845, the Augusta Canal was constructed through the western part of the city to handle barge traffic and provide a power source for industry. By 1850 two flourmills and one textile mill were located on the canal. The development of the steam locomotive engine fostered the creation of the Georgia Railroad Company in 1833 and the construction of a railroad line from Augusta to Athens. Additional railroad lines were built in the following years.

The canal, the mills and other industries in the Augusta area were important to the Confederate war effort. The Confederate Powderworks, said to be the largest munitions factory in the world, stretched for some two miles along the canal bank. An ornate chimney stands as the sole remnant of the powderworks complex. General William T.

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Sherman's "March to the Sea" in November 1864 avoided a well-fortified Augusta, thereby sparing the area serious damage.

Following the war, the canal was enlarged and several new textile mills were constructed on its banks. In addition to the mills, brick factories, lumber mills, railroad shops and related businesses were started in Augusta. Several new banks, warehouses and wharves also were constructed in the postwar years. The culmination of this period of industrial expansion was the designation of Augusta as the "Lowell of the South", and the presentation of an industrial exposition in the city in 1888.

While Augusta developed as a manufacturing center following the war, the rest of Richmond County remained agrarian. There were several communities within the county - Summerville, Bath, Blythe, Mt. Enon, Gracewood, and Hephzibah - but none approached Augusta in size or population. Incorporated in 1861, Summerville developed as a winter resort area for wealthy northerners. Many local residents also had summer homes in the community. Summerville became a part of the city of Augusta in 1911. Bath was settled around 1800 by Presbyterians from neighboring Burke County. At about the same time, Mt. Enon was settled as a Baptist village. The first Baptist College in the state was established here in 1807. The Gracewood community developed with the construction of the Augusta Southern Railroad. It was in Gracewood, beginning in 1869, that the Richmond Camp meetings were held for over half a century.

Historically, Augusta had developed from the banks of the Savannah River outward to the south and west. This same pattern of development continued at the turn of the century. In 1885 the trustees of Paine Institute secured the Douglas estate in Woodlawn for the present site of Paine College. With the construction of the Bon Air Hotel and the Partridge Inn, Augusta became a winter resort for corporate executives and heads of state. New residential development took place in various locations around town. The medical complex, located southwest of Georgia moved to the former site of the Orphan Asylum in 1913.

Several military camps were located in the Augusta area during this period, thereby continuing the community's long-time support for the military. In 1898, Camp Dyer was established in Turpin Hill and Camp McKenzie was developed at Wheeless Station. Camp Wheeler was located near Lake Aumond in 1914, and Camp Hancock was constructed in the vicinity of present-day Daniel Field in 1917. In 1928, Camp Lenwood was established on the site of what is now the Lenwood (Uptown) Veterans Administration Hospital.

Following the Great Depression, Augusta and Richmond County played an important role in World War II. Army personnel and equipment were assigned to Daniel Field. In 1942, the Forrest-Ricker Hotel was converted into an army hospital, and Camp (later Fort) Gordon was established in south Richmond County. An airfield for the training of army pilots was constructed on the site of what is now Augusta Regional Airport at Bush Field. The Augusta Arsenal - now the site of Augusta State University - served as a

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prisoner-of-war camp and produced bombsights and other lens instruments for the war effort.

Several postwar developments served to expand Augusta and Richmond County's role as the center of a growing metropolitan area. The construction of Clarks Hill Dam and Reservoir on the Savannah River (c. 1945-50), the development of the Savannah River Plant (now Savannah River Site) in Aiken and Barnwell Counties, South Carolina (c. 1951-53), and the establishment of Fort Gordon as a permanent military facility (c. 1956) contributed to population growth and economic development. In addition, the medical complex continued to develop near downtown Augusta. The complex now includes the Medical College of Georgia, Eugene Talmadge Memorial Hospital (c. 1956), MCG Sydenstricker Wing (c. 1979), University Hospital (c. 1970), Veterans Administration Hospital (c. 1980), and Walton Rehabilitation Hospital (c. 1989-90). Transportation improvements and the development of industrial parks and sites resulted in new manufacturing facilities in Richmond County. The county is now home to a variety of manufacturing facilities producing both durable and non-durable goods. The major categories of products include food, textiles, apparel, lumber, paper, printing, transportation equipment, chemicals, and stone, clay and glass products.

7.1 Inventory of Historic Resources

There are currently nine (9) National Register Historic Districts in Augusta, encompassing approximately 5,800 properties. Twenty-nine (29) properties are listed individually on the National Register. These districts and properties represent many aspects of Augusta's history and include the central business district, industrial facilities, urban neighborhoods, institutional buildings, and rural resources. They reflect the significant contributions made by statesmen, businessmen, religious leaders, ethnic groups, racial minorities, and ordinary citizens to the history and development of the community. Collectively the districts are significant in such areas as architecture, commerce, community planning, education, engineering, industry, landscape architecture, military, politics/government, religion, and transportation. Table HR-1 provides summary information on the National Register Historic Districts in Augusta.

Three areas - Downtown, Bethlehem, and Summerville have also been designated as local historic districts under the city's historic preservation ordinance. The ordinance specifies that the Historic Preservation Commission review work affecting the exterior appearance of any property in a local historic district prior to a building permit being issued. The objective of the design review requirement is to protect the integrity of designated historic properties and ensure that new development is compatible with the district's historic character. In addition to the districts, six individual properties have been designated as historic under the local ordinance. Table HR-2 lists the districts and properties designated under the local ordinance.

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Table HR-1 National Register Historic Districts Augusta-Richmond County		
Name	Number of Resources/ Properties (Approximate)	Dates(s) Listed in National Register
Augusta Canal	15	May 27, 1971; May 18, 1976; and Dec. 22, 1977 (Nat. Landmark)
Pinched Gut	700	March 6, 1980
Broad Street*	250	April 28, 1980
Summerville	2,000	May 22, 1980
Greene Street*	50	Dec. 3, 1980
Laney-Walker North	500	September 5, 1985
Harrisburg-West End	1,187	June 7, 1990
Sand Hills	335	July 9, 1997
Bethlehem	754	December 1, 1997
*Note: A National Register nomination is pending that will combine the Broad Street and Greene Street districts, along with other historic resources, into a single district.		

There are many historic resources in Augusta despite the changes the community has undergone over the years. Historic Augusta, Inc. maintains a file containing survey cards on approximately 2,000 historic buildings in the "former" city of Augusta. The survey cards represent work completed during the 1960s and 1970s by volunteers from the Junior League of Augusta, historic preservation consultants, and staff of the Augusta-Richmond County Planning Commission. The survey formed the basis for several National Register nominations during the 1970s. The number of documented resources increased dramatically during the 1980s and 1990s as additional surveys were completed and more properties were listed in the National Register. African-American resources were surveyed and the work resulted in the listing of three minority neighborhoods - Laney-Walker, Sand Hills and Bethlehem - in the National Register.

A separate survey completed by a historic preservation consultant in 1989 identified another 277 historic properties in unincorporated Richmond County, Hephzibah and

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Blythe. Of this total 49 are located in Hephzibah, 31 in Blythe, and the remainder are scattered throughout the county (now part of the city). Building examples survive from every period of the county's history and reflect such architectural styles as Federal, Greek Revival, Gothic Revival, Queen Anne, Colonial Revival, Neo-Classical, Bungalow, Craftsman, Tudor and Art Moderne. The majority of the structures are houses dating from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The Augusta-Richmond County Historic Preservation Plan (1991) contains more detailed information on historic resource surveys completed on Augusta and Richmond County.

Table HR-2 Local Historic Districts and Properties, 2002* Augusta-Richmond County		
Name	Number of Properties	Date Designated
Local Historic Districts		
Bethlehem District	1,260	April 5, 1993
Downtown District	1,300	June 6, 1994
Summerville District	1,435	Dec. 19, 1994; Oct. 5, 1999
Local Historic Properties		
Christ Episcopal Church, 1902 Greene St	1	April 4, 1994
Trinity C.M.E. Church, 818 Eighth St,	1	Oct. 18, 1993
Bath Presbyterian Church, Bath-Edie Road	1	Dec. 15, 1992
Liberty United Methodist Church, Liberty Church Rd	1	Dec. 18, 1992
Seclusaval-Windsor Spring, Windsor Spring Rd	1	Dec. 15, 1992
Mattox Property, Windsor Spring Rd	1	Sept. 5, 1995
*Note - All of the local designations were completed prior to consolidation and re-adopted by the Augusta Commission following consolidation.		

Archaeological resources are located on sites throughout Richmond County. Many of these sites have been discovered as part of the environmental review process required for federally funded or licensed projects. Some sites contain either pre-historic or historic artifacts. Sites along and near the Savannah River floodplains have yielded the most information.

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7.2 Historic Preservation Activities

Historic preservation in Augusta is marked by a wide variety of activities. From preparation of National Register nominations, to rehabilitation of historic buildings, to participation in historic preservation programs, individuals and organizations are interested in preserving the past and at the same time make it a part of the city's future. Beginning with the first historic resource surveys in the 1930s and the preservation of some notable structures in the 1940s, the local historic preservation movement has grown to the point where it is now an integral part of neighborhood revitalization, economic development and tourism. What follows is a summary of the historic preservation activities in recent years.

7.2.1 Survey and Nomination

Historic resource surveys document the age, condition and important characteristics of historic structures and sites, and provide a context or picture of how a community developed over time. As noted in the previous section, historic resource surveys have been completed on a number of occasions in the past with the help of many individuals and organizations. Surveys do need to be updated periodically in order to document changes in the condition or status of resources.

Nomination and listing of individual properties or districts in the National Register of Historic Places, Georgia Register of Historic Places, or as local historic property or district is a related activity that has generated much involvement over the years. Property owners, non-profit organizations, neighborhood associations, local government and many others have supported property and district nominations over the years. Listing in the National Register and the Georgia Register brings recognition to properties and makes owner/investors eligible to apply for tax credits and local property tax abatement when substantial rehabilitation work is completed on such properties. National Register listing also affords properties a measure of protection when projects are undertaken that involve federal loans, grants, licenses or permits. Designation under the city's historic preservation ordinance triggers a local design review process whenever changes to the exterior of a historic property are proposed.

7.2.2 Property Restoration

Restoration is the process of returning a historic property to its original state (i.e. how it appeared at the time of its construction) or to its condition at some known point in its history. This is different from rehabilitation, which involves fixing up a property for a more contemporary use. Historic preservation in Augusta first focused on the restoration of notable structures. The Daughters of the American Revolution purchased the George Walton House (Meadow Garden) in 1895 to preserve the residence of one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence. Meadow Garden remains in use today as a house museum.

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In 1947, the Richmond County Historical Society was founded in order to help restore what is now known as the Ezekiel Harris House. The city purchased the property in 1984 and subsequently made improvements to the house, caretaker's cottage and grounds of the property. Historic Augusta, Inc. now manages the house museum on behalf of the city. In 1987, the city purchased the Old Government House (c. 1801), rehabilitated the property, and makes it available for both public and private functions. In the spring of 1991 the city purchased the Boyhood Home of Woodrow Wilson and leased it for use by Historic Augusta. The property was restored with a combination of public and private funds and re-opened in 2001 as a house museum. Delta House, Inc. purchased the home of noted black educator Lucy Craft Laney. During the early 1990s the house was restored and a community meeting room was constructed on the property. Today, the Lucy C. Laney House and Museum is home to artifacts related to Ms. Laney's life, and hosts computer classes for children, art exhibits and community meetings.

7.2.3 Property Rehabilitation and Adaptive Reuse

Property rehabilitation and reuse is another integral part of historic preservation in Augusta. Every day property owners and investors rehabilitate historic structures for use as homes, apartments, offices, and retail establishments. Most such projects are privately financed, but some owners take advantage of rehabilitation tax credit and tax abatement programs. For a number of years the city used Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds to finance a façade rehabilitation program. Over the last 20 years, façade grants have helped finance the rehabilitation of approximately 150 historic commercial and residential structures. In recent years non-profit organizations and local authorities have started taking a more active role in the rehabilitation and reuse of historic properties. Non-profits such as the Augusta Neighborhood Improvement Corporation are rehabilitating neglected structures for use as affordable housing. The Augusta Canal Authority has several projects either planned or underway that will result in the rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of several structures in the Augusta Canal National Heritage Area. These resources will receive much needed improvements and have a new lease on life as tourist attractions.

7.2.4 Local Historic Preservation Programs

Organizations such as the Richmond County Historical Society and Historic Augusta were at the forefront of the local preservation movement. The local governments were supportive of these organizations and, as time went by, recognized that they themselves could play a more direct role in historic preservation. In 1970, the Georgia General Assembly passed a constitutional amendment authorizing the city of Augusta to establish historic preservation zones in downtown Augusta. In the following year, the city council adopted a historic preservation zone ordinance. The ordinance made it possible to overlay-historic preservation zoning on the base zoning classification for qualifying properties in downtown Augusta. Once historic preservation zoning was established, any material change in the exterior appearance of a designated property was subject to review by a five-member board of review. This local ordinance stayed in place for over two

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decades, but changes were happening at the state level that would alter the way local historic preservation programs were implemented across the state.

In 1980, the Georgia General Assembly enacted the "Georgia Historic Preservation Act". This law established a uniform procedure for use by cities and counties in the state in enacting local historic preservation ordinance. Among other things the state law established the powers for a local historic preservation commission, the procedure for designation of local historic properties and districts, and the process for carrying out design review requirements. A couple of years after the state law passed, the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) published a model historic preservation ordinance for use by local governments.

Augusta could have continued with its original historic preservation zone ordinance, as pre-existing local ordinances were deemed valid under a provision in the 1980 state law. However, by the late 1980s pressure was building to update the local ordinance and bring it in line with state law. In 1990, city council appointed an ad hoc committee to review the entire matter and make a recommendation regarding the form and content of the local historic preservation ordinance. The committee recommended that city council adopt a new ordinance very similar to the SHPO model ordinance. The city council adopted the ordinance in January 1992.

About the same time, the Richmond County Commission was taking steps to become more directly involved in historic preservation. In May 1988, the county commission established nine-member historic sites' committee to identify properties within the then unincorporated area of Richmond County that would be likely candidates for listing in the National Register. Subsequently, Historic Augusta was awarded a contract to complete a survey of historic resources in unincorporated Richmond County, Hephzibah and Blythe. The county commission adopted a historic preservation ordinance of its own on March 20, 1990, and appointed the five-member historic preservation commission on October 2, 1990. The county's ordinance was also very similar to the model ordinance. In 1991, the city and county jointly sponsored the development of the community's first historic preservation plan.

Today, the consolidated government's Historic Preservation Commission continues the work started by its predecessors. The 12-member commission meets monthly to consider applications for Certificate of Appropriateness, review ongoing preservation projects, and discuss other matters of interest. The Commission has taken steps to raise community awareness about historic preservation and works cooperatively with others to implement preservation planning projects.

7.2.5 Participation in Preservation Programs

Augustans have long been involved in a variety of historic preservation programs. The National Register of Historic Places is probably the most well known of the Federal preservation programs. Participation in the program has resulted in the listing of 9 districts and 29 individual properties in the National Register. Additional districts have

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been marked as potentially eligible for listing. Since the late 1970s, many local property owners and investors have taken advantage of the Federal Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit program. This program enables owner/investors to claim a tax credit for substantial rehabilitation of income-producing historic properties. Property owners have also participated in a state-level program that allows some property tax relief for historic properties that are rehabilitated.

Because Augusta routinely receives Federal grant funds for expenditure on community development and transportation projects, it is subject to the requirements of Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. Section 106 mandates that the State Historic Preservation Office and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation be afforded an opportunity to review and comment on the impact of federally-funded projects on properties listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register. The goal of the review process is to avoid or mitigate any adverse impacts on historic resources. Participation in this program helps avoid adverse impacts on some historic properties, ensures that new construction is compatible with existing resources, and results in archive-quality documentation for historic properties demolished as a part of larger projects.

The community has participated in the Certified Local Government (CLG) Program for approximately 16 years. This federal program recognizes communities that establish historic preservation ordinances and programs that meet certain standards. As a CLG, Augusta receives technical assistance on preservation issues, is part of a nationwide network of local governments involved in preservation, and is eligible to apply for a special setaside of preservation planning grant funds. The former city of Augusta was designated a CLG in May 1987, and the former county in March 1991. The consolidated government achieved the designation in 1997.

The community has also taken advantage of historic preservation grant programs. Over the last 15 years, grant awards under the U. S. Department of the Interior's Historic Preservation Fund (HPF) Program have funded a variety of preservation planning projects. Examples include historic resource surveys, a draft local historic preservation ordinance, the Augusta-Richmond County Historic Preservation Plan, National Register nominations, and design guidelines for two of the three local historic districts (Bethlehem and Downtown). The Summerville Neighborhood Association financed the development of the Summerville Design Guidelines, and a HPF grant funded publication of the same. Property owners and non-profit organizations have used the Heritage Grant Program to help finance the stabilization and rehabilitation of selected historic properties in the city.

7.2.6 Historic Documents and Records

People and organizations have long taken action to record historic events and make sure that the rich and varied of Augusta is maintained. Over the years monuments and markers have been erected throughout the community to commemorate notable statesmen, events (e.g. wars, natural disasters), educators, community leaders, religious leaders, and the location of historic events and structures. A number of organizations and institutions are responsible for the maintenance of historic documents, artifacts and

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records. These include the Augusta Museum of History, Richmond County Historical Society, Historic Augusta, Inc., Augusta Genealogical Society, and libraries at Augusta State University, Paine College and the East Central Georgia Regional Library. In addition, a number of local ethnic organizations and clubs work hard to preserve the rich and varied cultural history of Augusta and Richmond County. Ethnic cultural and arts festivals provide an opportunity for residents and visitors to learn more about local history and keep important traditions alive.

7.3 Assessment of Historic Preservation Needs

The community has made great strides in bringing recognition to Augusta's historic resources, restoring and rehabilitating them, and making them a part of daily life. The Augusta-Richmond County Historic Preservation Plan (1991) identified the following major needs in local historic preservation:

1. Establish procedures for ongoing identification, nomination and protection of historic resources.
2. Develop strategies for preserving and enhancing historic residential neighborhoods.
3. Develop strategies for revitalizing and preserving historic business districts, including neighborhood and small town business districts.
4. Develop strategies for preserving isolated rural historic resources.
5. Enhance monetary incentives for preserving historic resources.
6. Improve and enhance environmental design, including landscaping and aesthetic improvements.
7. Develop an ongoing heritage education program for children and adults.

Programs and projects are in place to deal with many of these needs, but some have not been addressed. There is a need to update and consolidate the local historic resource surveys that are 20-30 years old. Many resources continue to be threatened due to neglect or insensitive rehabilitation. Strategies are needed to encourage ordinary maintenance and repair or the mothballing of vacant buildings. There is a need to continue to stress the economic benefits of historic preservation and how it contributes to education and neighborhood revitalization. Finally, the local historic preservation plan requires updating to better reflect the changes in Augusta's preservation activities and establish a comprehensive set of goals for the future.